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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002153

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: CHP'S KEMAL DERSVIS: THIS PLOUGH CAN'T SCOUR

REF: A. 02 ANKARA 7606

[1](#)B. 03 ANKARA 2048

[1](#)C. 03 ANKARA 5001

(U) Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter.
Reason: 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: CHP deputy Kemal Dervis April 13 resigned as party Vice Chairman and from his position on CHP's executive board. Our contacts say Dervis will not challenge current CHP chairman Baykal and will instead engage in a "war of ideas" versus the party's statist hardliners. The ability of Dervis to effect meaningful change will be circumscribed by the widespread perception in Anatolia that he is another in a long line of elites out of touch with the needs of ordinary citizens. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) CHP Istanbul deputy and former State Minister Kemal Dervis resigned April 13 from his positions as party Vice Chairman, as a member of the party's executive board, and as head of the CHP research arm called Science Platform. Citing philosophical differences with CHP leadership, Dervis said "there is no benefit to my continuing to perform my duties in light of the local election results." In his written statement, Dervis said he will gather like-minded intellectuals and try to promote social democracy in CHP and Turkey in general. He will remain both a CHP member and a member of the party assembly. Speaking to the press following his resignation announcement, Dervis re-affirmed that he has no intentions of running for party chairman, chiding journalists, "why can't I convince any of you?"

Not Ready for the Big Dance

[1](#)3. (C) In reiterating his intent not to challenge party chairman Deniz Baykal, Dervis has once again shown little desire to assume the kind of leadership role a small number CHP deputies hoped he would. Long-time Dervis supporter and CHP Edirne M.P. Necdet Budak conceded to us April 13 that now it is difficult to say Dervis has a "team" in the party, because that would imply that Dervis is a leader. "Dervis doesn't even want to be a leader," a clearly disappointed Budak said. Budak asserted that Dervis does not have the personality needed to succeed in the rough world of Turkish politics. With Baykal at the helm and Dervis removing himself from the picture, Budak -- a former professor at Ege University in Izmir -- does not see CHP clearing the threshold in the next national election. "I am already looking at how I can get back into academia."

[1](#)4. (C) Close Dervis confidant and CHP Istanbul M.P. Memduh Hacıoglu largely echoed Budak's sentiment in an April 14 meeting, saying Dervis has no great political ambitions. Although he would not entirely rule out an eventual push to become party chairman, Hacıoglu said Dervis genuinely values his private life too much to devote 100 percent of his time to national politics (Dervis himself has told us much the same thing). As a result, Hacıoglu explained, Dervis does not think engaging in a highly publicized battle for CHP's soul is worth it. Neither Hacıoglu nor Budak see another Dervis-ite emerging to challenge the current party leadership.

[1](#)5. (C) Dervis' apparent distaste for politics will relegate him to the role of mentor to his like-minded CHP colleagues, who number no more than 15-20 M.P.s. Hacıoglu asserted that the group will engage the more hard-line, statist CHPers in a "war of ideas," which he claimed could be more successful than a "war of personalities." A less optimistic Budak said he will continue to look to Dervis as a "repository of ideas" and will continue to support Dervis' efforts to develop social democracy. Budak averred, however, that Dervis' ability to influence politics in a meaningful way will now be severely limited.

And May Never Be

16. (C) Relegated to the sidelines, Dervis and his group naively hope to change CHP from the "Party of the State" into something resembling a European-style social democratic party by publishing research papers. Moreover they will face at least three hurdles: 1) internal party resistance to change and self-criticism; 2) the reality here that European notions of social democracy will find little traction among Turkey's conservative poor; and 3) the widespread view of Dervis in Anatolia as another Istanbul elite out of touch with the common man (reftels). In the latter regard, Hacıoglu claimed that "there is a market for Dervis" and that everywhere Dervis goes, "Turks want to touch him." Yet we cannot recall one instance in which Dervis has traveled through Anatolia.
EDELMAN